

The Cross



The cross was an instrument of torture that Romans used extensively. Jesus, our Saviour, died in a cross.¹ He was executed by Roman soldiers, instigated by Jewish leaders.² The cross became the focal point of the plan of salvation that God has for the human race.³ What seemed like a defeat, was actually the most complete victory, because Jesus died in our place taking with his innocence our sins.⁴ Death on the cross was cruel and was produced by slow suffocation, prolonging an agony that lasted between twelve hours and one or two days. The cross was made of wood and could be of different shapes although the one which seems to be most used and probably in which Jesus died, had the known

shape of †, composed by a big log and a lower crossbar. Sometimes, it also had a small piece or wooden wedge where the feet of the condemned were nailed to lengthen his suffering. As the Gospels tell, after being arrested, Jesus suffered different interrogations overnight, was cruelly beaten twice and was unable to sleep, eat or drink for several hours. He was mistreated and he suffered constant teasing, like the coronation with a crown of hurtful thorns, that filled his face of blood.⁵

A large crowd followed Jesus from the Praetorian until the Calvary⁶, by the way that now is known as Via Dolorosa. The news of his condemnation had spread throughout Jerusalem and many people of all classes and hierarchies attended, both on the road as on the outskirts of Jerusalem, at the place of execution, known as Golgotha, which means, the Calvary or place of skull.⁷ Leaving the court of Pilates, the cross that had been prepared for Barrabas⁸, a criminal, was placed on his bruised and bloodied shoulders.⁹ The load was too heavy for Jesus, who, due to his weakness, fall collapsed under the heavy weight of the load. Seeing that he could not carry it away, they forced an outsider to take it. It was Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country.¹⁰ Two companions of Barabbas were going to suffer death at the same time as Jesus, placed on each side of Jesus.¹¹ It was the third hour, that is, nine o'clock in the morning, when the palms of Jesus' hands were nailed to the cross with his arms outstretched and probably tied on to the crossbar.¹² His feet were also nailed, but the text highlights that they did not break any of his bones.¹³ Many prophecies were fulfilled on that occasion, regarding the circumstances of the death of the Messiah. His clothes, which were raffled¹⁴; the drink of vinegar and gall they offered him.¹⁵ Pilate ordered to put an inscription in the log, over Jesus' head. It was the title that he wrote and that bothered the Jewish leaders: 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.' It was written in Greek, Latin and Hebrew.¹⁶ Many mocked Jesus, but as the soldiers were doing their fearful work, Jesus prayed for his enemies, 'Father, forgive them, because they had no knowledge of what they are doing'.¹⁷ Being in his most painful moment he also remembered his mother Mary who was present there, and procured John to assist her in the future¹⁸, who was also near the cross, along with many other female followers of Christ.¹⁹

But on these moments, feeling the terrible weight carrying our guilt, could not see the reconciling face of the Father.²⁰ Feeling the Saviour that the divine countenance disappeared from his face in this hour of supreme anguish, a grief that never could be understood by humans pierced his heart. This agony was so strong that he almost could not feel the physical pain. His suffering was from the sense of the malignity of sin placed on him at the time.

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It really was that mental suffering what killed him, for he died much sooner than usual, surprising everybody²¹, so his legs were not broken contrary to what happened to the other two defendants, one of whom had defended him, recognized him as the Messiah and begged him obtaining his grace to be with him when he came in his kingdom.²² A soldier thrust a spear into Jesus' side to check he was already dead.²³ Amazing things happened when Jesus was crucified. From the sixth hour until the ninth, a very thick gloom darkened the place.²⁴ Then, after crying, 'It is finished. Father, in your hands I commend my spirit,' Jesus died and a violent earthquake shook Jerusalem, even opening up many tombs and everyone fell to the ground scared.²⁵ The great veil of the temple was torn from the top to the bottom, exposing the Holiest Place to everyone.²⁶ The centurion who was in command of the soldiers, stunned by what was happening, exclaimed: 'This truly was the Son of God.'²⁷ God's purpose was fulfilled. The Lord of glory was dying for the human family. Jesus was earning the right to be the lawyer of the men in the presence of the Father.²⁸ Over all men bear the guilt of crucifying the Son of God, but all are freely offered forgiveness.' Everyone who wants can have peace with God and inherit eternal life.²⁹

The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, his flesh was lacerated by the stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, were nailed to the cross; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, were spiked to the cross; that royal head was pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips were crying with grief. And all he suffered: the drops of blood that fell from his head, his hands and feet, the agony that racked his body and the unspeakable anguish that filled his soul when his father hid his face, speaks to each child of the humanity and declares: For you Jesus, the Son of God, consents to bear this burden of guilt; for you, he spoils the domain of death and opens the gates of Paradise. The one who calmed the angry waves and walked the foamy crest of the waves³⁰, the one who made the demons shake³¹ and flee the disease³², the one who opened the eyes of the blind³³ and restored life to the dead³⁴, offered himself as a sacrifice in the cross, and he did this for love to each and every one of us.³⁵ He, the Sin Bearer, endured the wrath of divine justice and for our sake became sin.³⁶

Biblical References:

1. Hebrews 12: 2; Philippians 2: 6-11
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3. Colossians 1: 20; Ephesians 2: 16; 1 Corinthians 1: 17
4. Isaiah 53: 6; John 12: 32, 33
5. Matthew 27: 27-31; Mark 15: 16-20; John 19: 1-3
6. Luke 23: 27, 48, 49
7. Matthew 27: 33; Mark 15: 22; Hebrews 13: 12
8. Matthew 27: 20-24; Mark 15: 11-15; Luke 23: 13-25
9. Matthew 27: 31; John 19: 17
10. Matthew 27: 32; Mark 15: 21; Luke 23: 26
11. Luke 23: 32, 33; Mark 15: 27, 28; Matthew 27: 38
12. Mark 15: 25; John 20: 25-27; Isaiah 49: 16;
13. John 19: 31-33, 36, 37; Psalms 22: 17; 34: 20; Zechariah 12: 10
14. John 19: 23, 24; Psalms 22: 18; Matthew 27: 35
15. Matthew 27: 34, 48; Psalms 69: 21; John 19: 28, 29
16. John 19: 19-22; Luke 23: 38; Matthew 27: 37; Mark 15: 26
17. Luke 23: 34-37; Mark 15: 29-32; Isaiah 53: 11, 12
18. John 19: 26, 27

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19. Matthew 27: 55, 56; Mark 15: 40, 41; John 19: 25
20. Mark 15: 34; Matthew 27: 46, 47; Psalms 22: 1
21. Mark 15: 43-45; John 19: 33
22. Luke 23: 39-43; Matthew 24: 31-34; John 5: 28, 29
23. John 19: 32-34
24. Mark 15: 33; Mateo 27: 45; Luke 23: 44
25. Matthew 27: 50-53; John 19: 30; Luke 23: 46-48; Mark 15: 37
26. Mark 15: 38
27. Matthew 27: 54; Mark 15: 39
28. 1 John 2: 1; Hebrews 5: 8, 9; 1 Timothy 2: 5
29. Isaiah 53: 4, 5; Romans 3: 23-25; 6: 23; Acts 5: 30-32
30. Matthew 8: 24-27; 14: 24-26; Mark 4: 37-41
31. Matthew 17: 18; Mark 1: 34; Luke 4: 41
32. Luke 4: 36-41
33. Luke 18: 35-43; 4: 18; John 9: 1-7
34. Luke 7: 11-17; 8: 41, 42, 49-56; John 11: 38-44
35. Romans 5: 8; John 3: 16; 1 John 4: 10, 14-16
36. Isaiah 53: 12; Galatians 3: 13; 1 Peter 2: 24